



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Conjunctivitis

What is conjunctivitis ?	Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, the thin, clear tissue that lies over the white part of the eye and lines the inside of the eyelid. It is often referred to as “pink eye”. Conjunctivitis has a number of different causes, including viral, allergic, irritants and bacteria.
What are the symptoms?	<p>The symptoms of conjunctivitis differ based on the cause, but may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redness in the white of the eye or inner eyelid • Itching and/or burning of the eye • Increased amount of tears • Thick yellow discharge that crusts over the eyelashes, especially after sleep • Green or white discharge from the eye • Swelling around the eye
How is it treated?	<p>See your doctor if you have any symptoms of conjunctivitis. He or she may take a sample of fluid from the eyelid using a cotton swab to be analyzed.</p> <p>Conjunctivitis caused by bacteria can be treated with antibiotics, in the form of eye drops, ointments, or pills. Take the medicine as instructed by your doctor, even if the symptoms of conjunctivitis go away.</p> <p>If the conjunctivitis is caused by a virus, antibiotics will not be effective. Most people recover with supportive treatment that includes rest, drinking plenty of fluids and over-the-counter medications to reduce discomfort. Just as a cold must run its course, so must this form of conjunctivitis, which usually lasts from 4 to 7 days.</p>
How do people catch this disease?	Bacterial and viral conjunctivitis are very contagious. They are easily spread by coming into contact with discharge from the eye of someone with the condition. A person with the condition will rub their eye to ease the discomfort and then touch a book or a toy or a door knob.
What can be done to stop the spread of this disease?	Proper hygiene and frequent handwashing will reduce the risk of transmission. If someone in your household or classroom has conjunctivitis, be sure to wash your hands often and thoroughly. Avoid sharing washcloths, towels, pillowcases, mascara or eyeliner with anyone.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Region 7

Serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties

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